

THE REFORMER.

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Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth. Jeremiah, v. 1.

EDITORIAL REMARKS.

Some of our readers may be disposed to think, we occupy too large a portion of our pages in pointing out faults, and describing the degenerate state of the world. To such we need only observe, that people must first be fully convinced of the present corrupt state of christendom, before they will ever seek to become better. It was said by our Lord, "*They that be whole, need not a physician; but they that are sick:*" and it is equally certain, that such as are sick, must be made sensible that this is their condition, before they will seek to be healed.

There are others who may consider us too severe in our reflections—betraying a want of charity. In reply we would state; it has always been necessary to oppose with success, long standing and popular evils, to speak with plainness and decision. Soft words and gentle remonstrances have never been of any avail, in correcting the sins and reforming the practices of mankind; nor have they ever characterized the messengers of truth in any age. It is unnecessary to cite cases in proof of this statement. All the prophets, the blessed Redeemer, and every faithful witness down to the present day, might be brought into view, in confirmation of its truth. Their testimony was considered by those against whom it was delivered, as harsh, censorious, and uncharitable; and in their day and generation, they were hated and persecuted as troublers of Israel, and the foes of mankind.—We are at all times to be governed by a principle of integrity, and the spirit of the gospel; but this very government, will not allow of making any affinity or agreement with the works of unrighteousness, but constrain us to testify against them.

It is by no means pleasing to flesh and blood to rebuke iniquity, and as a consequence, encounter ill-will and opposition : and it may be well for those who are disposed to join with others against such as do this, to consider the obligations which are imposed on them to witness against prevailing evils, and the vast strides which sin and unrighteousness would make, were there not some to encounter the storm, enter into the furnace, and submit to undergo censures and revilings, in order to arrest their progress, and labour in behalf of the truth, and for the welfare of men. It is through those who have been hated, persecuted and condemned, in their day and time, that we are indebted for all the truth and righteousness that is now in the world. The ancient prophets, above all other men, were actuated by pure principles, and sought the good of men ; but said the holy martyr Stephen to the Jews, as he was about to become a victim of their opposition and rage, “ which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted ? ” Christ Jesus, the Lord, was himself called Belzebub, rejected and put to death ; and nearly all his immediate Apostles experienced much the same fate, and sealed their testimony with their blood ; but through them, the pure and blessed gospel was spread in all parts, to the salvation and comfort of thousands, both in time and eternity. And to this day, we reap the benefits of their labours and their toils.

We wish not to enlarge ; we desire always to be as concise as possible, in order to give room for our correspondents : but here we would again state, that we wish every one to feel the weight of the subject upon which they treat, and have their aim pure ; and never write for the sake of writing.

It may be proper, however, once more to notice what has been said by some, viz. that we do not sufficiently show what is *right*, and what people ought to do. This objection, we are disposed to believe, arises merely from a disposition to have something to say, as many such there are. We have already shown at considerable length, that our chief concern is to point out what is wrong, and seek to do it away ; for if what is wrong be done away, only what is good and right, will be left remaining. Hence, if this can be effected, it is sufficient. Besides, we are fully sensible that all people *know*, bet-

ter than they do ; and if there was only a true disposition in every one, at all times and in every respect to do right, and they were sincerely aiming and seeking to do this, the Lord would make it known unto them. This, therefore, is the important point for every one to come to. Our Saviour has said, *if any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine, &c.* and all the error and delusion that has been in the world, has arisen from a want of integrity and sincerity in mankind. For when men have no love to the truth, and are averse to do it, they are given up to strong delusions to believe a lie ; and they will continue to believe a lie, while they are destitute of a principle of integrity in their hearts. It was because Saul of Tarsus acted in a great measure from principle, that the Lord mercifully made known to him his error ; when he immediately turned from it. But when people, like the great body of the Jewish nation, are destitute of principle, if the truth be set before them ever so clearly, it is of no use to them : they will neither receive it nor do it, if it would render them unpopular, expose them to persecution, or operate against their temporal interests ; and this will generally be the case.

In conclusion we would state ; that every person who is not truly sincere; that does not act from principle; that is not faithful to his promise; that does not do to another as he would be done to; and that never contracts a debt without an intention and a prospect of paying it, is in the high road to destruction, whatever pretensions to religion he may make ; and he has no proper right to name the name of Christ, or call himself one of his disciples. These are the weightier matters of the divine law ; to which, if a man do not yield true and sincere obedience, all his paying tithe of mint, anise and cummin, and saying, Lord, Lord, will be of no avail.

CALVINISM.

To show that the Presbyterians still tenaciously adhere to their old doctrine of *partial atonement* and *particular election*, we will make a few extracts from the ' Presbyterian Magazine' of March last, as here follow :

" As the scriptures do not authorize us to believe that

the vicarious atonement of the Redeemer embraced every individual of the human race, I shall proceed to demonstrate the *particularity* of redemption ; or show that Jesus Christ died for a *select* number, and not for the *whole* of mankind. However ungracious this doctrine may appear to its opponents, we feel convinced, that it is the doctrine of the Bible, and can be satisfactorily established.

" That the persons for whom Jesus laid down his life, are a *selection* from among men, is evident from the epithets and names by which they are designated, by the Spirit of God, in the sacred oracles. They are called *Elect*, according to the foreknowledge of God—*Redeemed from among men*—*Few*, when compared with the great mass of mankind. Jesus denominates them, *his sheep*, *his friends*, *his brethren*, as contradistinguished from the *goats*, *enemies* and *aliens*—*not of the world*, but *chosen out of the world*; with many other such characteristics of peculiarity.

" We shall now endeavour to obviate some of the principal objections alleged, 1st, from scripture, and, 2d, from reason, against the doctrine of a particular atonement, or, that Jesus died only for *some* of the human race, and that consequently only *some* shall be saved. Such alone shall be exempted from deserved eternal misery, on the ground of a substitutional expiation. The vicarious atonement, however valuable in itself, intrinsically considered, can be of no importance to those who were not embraced in its design."

We also select the following paragraph from a *Tract*, published by the Presbyterian Tract Society of this city, April, 1820, entitled "The History of a Convert."

Says this Convert : " I cannot close this detail without adding, that in the time of my affliction, the doctrine of election" [by which, we suppose, is to be understood *Christ's dying only for a certain number*] " appeared irritating and confounding; now it appears marvellously glorious, and truly humbling. I pity Armenians, and every person who is offended, however secretly, with this doctrine. It is a *convincing proof* to me, that there is a great *defect* in their faith and love, and a want of submission to *plain scripture*. In my worst time, I saw it to be a *truth*; only I wished it had not been true; and

often it seemed a check to every exertion. But, to deny that it is contained in the Bible, appears to be the door to downright deism."

We do not insert these extracts with a view to introduce any controversy on these points, or to induce our correspondents to enter upon a refutation of them. Enough has been said and written on subjects of this nature, in days that are past, and we consider any further discussion of them, at this time, among those dry disputes that would be unprofitable. If a person has not something in himself, to secure him against the belief of such a doctrine, arguments and deductions, either from scripture or reason, will be of very little avail to convince him of its inconsistency. We conclude by subjoining some observations of William Lewis of England, Memoirs of whose life have been lately re-printed in this city.

" What has been already mentioned relates to *practice*; but Oh ! what shall be said with respect to *doctrine* : even that preached and enforced by those who assume the appellation of evangelical teachers ; of gospel ministers ? When many of these teachers can dare to charge the God of love foolishly, by declaring his covenant of redemption in Christ Jesus, to be limited, reaching in its effectual operation, to a *chosen few* only ; whilst the rest, myriads and myriads, in every generation, born heirs of Adam's pollution and misery, were never meant, in the secret counsel and will of God, to be included in this covenant, but are left to perish eternally ; having only such calls from him to turn from their iniquity, as aggravate their continuance therein, but which communicate nothing of that redeeming power which alone could possibly deliver therefrom ; *that* being confined to the elect. These are some of the marks that the present is, as I conceive, a dark day—a day in which the children of the light should indeed hold fast the faithful word of truth ; having no fellowship with such shockingly gross errors."

For The Reformer.

Religion in this country is not yet a creature of the government, and of course, the tythe of our estates is not appropriated by law to the use of the clergy. It is optional whether we belong to this religious society or to that,

whether we pay for our preaching or not. We might thence suppose that the tyranny of priestcraft was much at an end here, and that their assumed authority over others, had lost much of its influence. This doubtless would have been more the case, if people were not so credulous. Their unwillingness to think and decide for themselves, in matters of religion, enables the hireling, whose prime motive is a living, to direct their faith and practice in such manner as shall best answer his own purpose. Hence he persuades them to believe that he makes their religious welfare and salvation, his sole study; and consequently must know more about it than they do. He has received an "appropriate education," served an "apprenticeship," and been "regularly" installed in the ministerial office, by the pretended successors of the Holy Apostles. With these imposing authorities and the sanctimonious air of an ecclesiastical dignitary, he commands implicit confidence and a respect almost amounting to adoration. He is thought to be more holy than the "*lay-brethren*," and from the confidence with which he inculcates his imaginary superiority, we may conclude he thinks himself so. By this wonder-working "apprenticeship," and "particular ceremony" in *imitation* of the Apostles, he is prepared to teach "as having authority." He is raised to the pinnacle of power in the church, and pretty much by the same means, that the sorcerer held out to Peter as an inducement to make him a *successor*. He has now the power of communicating this authority to any number who may wish to be 'co-workers' with him, provided they have served a similar "apprenticeship," and self-interest would no doubt induce him to denounce as "lawless and disorderly," any lay-pretender who shall dare to interfere with his exclusive right to preach the gospel. Were mankind as deeply enveloped in darkness and superstition as they were during the era of papal indulgences, we might soon expect to be informed by public notice, where commissions for the office of ministers could be procured, and the prices from a "Right Reverend" down to a common "D. D."

Should any one suppose this is a mere burlesque, let him examine the 3d and 4th pages of the last Reformer, containing extracts from "Thoughts on lay-preaching." We are there in the first place told, "the ministry is an ordi-

nance of God ; this is a fact denied only by schismatics :" and then, " the authority to exercise the functions of this office can *only* be communicated by *those* who already possess that authority." That is, the ordinance belongs to God, but the *authority* to exercise the functions, is *only communicated* by man. What palpable inconsistency and open usurpation of the divine right ! But where has there, since the days of the Apostles, been more corruption, and more power exerted to corrupt others, than among the clergy—among the very men, who are pretended to have been the lineal successors of the Holy Apostles. And yet through this impure channel we are to derive all " authority to exercise the functions" of Gospel ministers. For their all-potent prerogative, dependent upon an uninterrupted succession from the beginning, must vanish, unless they admit it descended through the profligates and murderers that have filled the See of Rome, or the bishops and priests who have been the relentless persecutors of dissenting christians. That man must be in a state of extreme darkness to believe the Head of the Church ever intrusted his ministry to the direction of such a band, or to suppose that such arrogant pretensions will pass for truth in the present age. Though we have not had a college education, and would be considered a part of the " great mass of ignorance in the world," we are nevertheless furnished with sufficient light to detect the fallaciousness of such assertions. " That ministers of the gospel *alone* have authority to admit others to be co-workers with them, to the whole extent of ministerial duty," and that by the mimicry of any practice " a regular succession of Gospel ministers has been preserved in the church," is a doctrine that has no foundation in truth, and the attempt to obtrude it upon the world is but the bold effort of a mercenary priesthood to support their tottering hierarchy.

That "human literature is essential to a faithful and edifying ministry," and that " this is a fact which has been abundantly corroborated by the past experience of the church," we cannot subscribe to. We would inquire why Christ did not select his apostles from among the literati of that age. The council at Jerusalem perceived that Peter and John were ignorant and unlearned men, and yet could not deny they were accompanied by a super-

natural power. Observe the fruits of their ministry, the hundreds who were added to the church daily of such as should be saved. But, say you, they were peculiarly endued with power from on high. And so is every true gospel minister, and has been in every age since. That they were *more eminently* furnished with this divine qualification, than has fallen to the lot of ministers generally, we acknowledge; but that human learning will make a man a minister of Christ, or that he can at all be one without this heavenly endowment, we unequivocally deny. Look at the history of the church since the first three hundred years of the Christian era: and what a picture does it present in its bishops and priests at various periods, of every quality that is repugnant to the christian character, and yet the learning of the time was chiefly confined to them! No, the further the church recedes from the immediate direction of its legitimate Head, and relies upon human ability and learning, the greater and the more effectual will be its degeneracy from the life and power of godliness. We are not opposed to the acquisition of useful learning, but to any reliance upon it as the "peculiar qualifications" of a gospel minister. Paul was perhaps the most learned of any of the Apostles, though from his occupation we might suppose he did not rank very high in the world. *He* counted all things as dross in comparison of the excellency of the *knowledge of Christ*. His speech and his preaching, he declared were not in the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the *spirit*! He received his ministry neither *of* man nor *by* man, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ; the only origin and authority of all true gospel ministry. And in proportion as this kind of preaching is restored to the church, we can only expect to see the same fruits produced by it.

Although our writer on *lay*-preaching ridicules the sentiment, that "any individual is invested with a right to preach," who possesses what "many pious well intentioned persons style a *gift*," we feel rather disposed to admit as true the testimony of Paul on this subject, than to be shuffled by his contempt from our conviction of the certainty of that doctrine.—He says that when our Lord ascended "he gave *gifts* unto men;" "he gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists,

some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”—In another epistle, “ Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.”—Whence it is evident that *gifts* are given to the members of the church; that these gifts come down from above, from the Father of lights and of spirits, and are not derived through any human source whatever.—That so far from speakers being exclusively the judges of ministry, it is the privilege of all who hear; but it is the *spiritual* man only, who is at all capable of judging rightly.—And as “ God is not the author of confusion but of peace as in all the churches of the Saints,” he preserves every member in his proper “ sphere” whose confidence is placed solely in Him, whether preacher or hearer.

But now a belief in spiritual gifts is considered fanaticism, and “ a blessing is only to be reasonably expected from the proper application of *human* exertions.”—Accordingly the people are annually laid under heavy contributions—they are urged under the plea of promoting their spiritual interests to bring in their mites, their cents or their dollars, in order to educate mendicant candidates for the ministry, to edify and preserve the body of Christ. Divine Revelation, the foundation upon which Jesus Christ declared *he* would build *his* church, is now to be superseded by one of silver and gold. This is the base upon which their superstructure stands; take away the silver and the wedge of gold, and the fabric falls: the hireling will soon take his flight, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the flock, but for the aggrandizement of himself and his family.

What a fearful contrast between the faith of the first promulgators of christianity, and that of a carnal worldly clergy, who imagine themselves their legitimate descendants. The deception with which they are enveloped, and are attempting to impose upon others is truly monstrous. Can it be possible that such persons seriously believe themselves in the least degree entitled to the character of ministers of Christ? Even in the Jewish Church, when some officious person reported to Moses that there were

two in the camp who prophesied, and Joshua forbade them, Moses replied, “*enviest thou for my sake?* would God that *all* the Lord’s people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them.” And now that the time has come, in which the prediction is fulfilled, “I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,” &c. &c. the blind leaders of the blind, gather together against the Lord, and against his anointed, to suppress if possible a faithful obedience to this divine monitor. Even its impulse to preach the gospel unaccompanied with human learning, characterizes “a disturber of the church;” “private christians,” are prohibited from exercising their gifts, and thus the spirit is quenched and prophesying despised.

Lyman Beecher and his confederates instruct us to believe we shall retrograde into barbarism, unless they furnish an additional number of college-bred ministers, to convert and keep us to their faith. But as we observed before, these are the struggles of a tottering priesthood. Demetrius and the craftsmen begin to find that light breaks too fast for them, and that unless they can persuade us they have the exclusive right to the gospel ministry, the gains of their trade will come to an end. We have no doubt that the day is approaching, and therefore adopt the language of Paul, “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable *gift*;” the gift of grace and truth which came by our Lord Jesus Christ, of which, the little stone that Nebuchadnezzar beheld cut out of the mountain without hands, was a figure. It shall break in pieces their idols and their images, and establish a kingdom that shall grow and increase till it fills the whole earth.

A. M.

For The Reformer.

[Communicated from Massachusetts.]

Messrs. Editors.—Having read the Reformer, I must say it contains the same testimony I have felt it to be my duty publicly to bear, for some years past: I mean a testimony against college or men-made ministers, and such as go forth with no other qualification: for I consider these ministers to be a far greater judgment upon the

people than pestilence, famine or war; and above any other class of men, calculated to pave the way to ruin. They are, indeed, like the *locusts* that went up over all the land of Egypt, very grievous to the truly faithful; and at this day they have a formidable appearance, and cover the face of christendom: and with their heathenish philosophy and College divination, they darken the understandings of those who adhere to them and give them flattering titles, which foster the pride of their un-renewed hearts. And these men-made ministers eat up every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees, so that there remaineth not any green thing in the trees; or in other words, there remaineth not any pure love to God, and good will to men, in those that receive their doctrine, and support them: for their word doth eat as a canker, and they spread barrenness and death in all their communications. They come forth in their own wisdom, and with that excellency of speech so highly esteemed by men of corrupt minds, who preach themselves, and esteem themselves as the only men with whom wisdom dwells. And as they are proud and covetous, their adherents catch the poisonous influence, and it is *like people, like priest*. They support a war system and thirst for blood, when their honour, or their interest is attacked: and I am constrained to lift up a warning voice to all who regard the truth, or their own ever lasting welfare, not to afford the least aid or support to college-manufactured ministers; lest they be partakers of their sins, and receive of their plagues. It is by reason of these men and their ministry, that pure and undefiled religion has of late so much declined: and it is easy to perceive and understand, if we are not hoodwinked with priestcraft, that the time is approaching when the unclean spirits will go forth unto the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day.

How blind are those that do not *discern* the *signs of the times*; and perceive that a ministry begun in the will and wisdom of man, qualified in seminaries of learning, and supported in pride, is under the influence of a spirit hostile to the kingdom of the Prince of Peace, and will be overthrown by war and bloodshed, when their iniquity is full. The Apostle has said, that *no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost*. This qualifica-

tion is an essential one ; and those who have not this qualification, cannot preach the gospel of peace with power and demonstration of the spirit. But a sad change, indeed, has taken place, and but few lift up a warning voice against the prevailing customs—so many sermons for so much money, the reason is obvious ; and let this be for a lamentation ; and like Daniel, may the pure in heart daily and fervently pray, and patiently wait, in a way of holy obedience and faithfulness, for deliverance from these greedy, proud and assuming men. A BAPTIST.

For The Reformer.

To deny that the Apostles and primitive believers were actuated by the constraining love of Christ, in their endeavours to promote the interests of his kingdom, when they lived and walked in a consistency so answerable to the pattern set before them by their divine Master would be unreasonable and absurd. And on the other hand, to believe that all who are actively engaged at the present day, in Missionary and Bible Societies, and other associations professedly designed to spread the Gospel in the earth, are also actuated by the same constraining principle, would be a sad mistake ; were it the case true religion would prevail in a greater degree than it does. To judge indeed of the increase of the blessed government of the Prince of Peace, by the hundreds of thousands that are actively engaged in diffusing the outward knowledge of christianity, is a very uncertain criterion ; and were it not for that excellent rule of our Saviour's, viz. "by their fruits ye shall know them," and by which we are enabled to ascertain the true state of mankind, we might be grossly deceived in believing that there is a great deal of religion now in the world and that all is very well.

What real ground is there to indulge in the comfortable prospect that righteousness ere long will cover the earth, when professing christians in their various endeavours and undertakings, to bring about this event, have associated so much pride and vanity, as to be wholly strangers to the all important duties of self-denial and the cross. Oh the infatuation and mistaken zeal of many ! how much better would it be, were they individually

more concerned to be conformed to the example of the blessed Saviour, who in all that he did, sought not the honour of men, but that honour which cometh from God only, and whose meat and drink it was to do the will of his Father in heaven.

In whatever our activity or zeal may determine itself, it is certain that nothing can give us a just claim to the title of disciples of Christ, but putting on Christ, and walking as he walked. And if the precepts of Christ had more possession of peoples' hearts than their heads, and they were more disposed to manifest their christianity by their fruits, than by pompous and splendid undertakings, the face of society would wear a far more encouraging aspect. But the truth of the matter is, nearly all are given to covetousness, in a greater or lesser degree, from the prophet to the priest, and so down to the lowest order of the human family, and it cleaves to them in all they do. To be seen of men, to have glory of men, or procure gain to themselves, is the ruling principle of the soul; each one engaging in, or following after something that appears calculated to make them what their hearts would prompt them to be, which is nothing less than lords or great men in the creation.

True religion is something more than an accordance with certain doctrines and matters of faith, and being active and zealous in their propagation; which is the only religion of too many in the present day, who appear to have more thought and interest about the heritage, or their own society, than what appertains to themselves or the true kingdom of righteousness in the heart. Whenever this is the case, there is a want of that charity which only can reform, make men preachers of righteousness, and Aarons and Hurrs in the camp of God.

To be true disciples of Christ, as observed before, is to put on Christ, to do his will and not our own; the effect of which will so change our natures, as to reduce them from that of a lion and leopard, to the similitude and disposition of the lamb, that even a child may lead. And why? Because in this association there is "nothing that can hurt or destroy;" nothing that can do any injustice or wrong. This is the effect of the religion of Christ, in which the highest greatness consists in becoming little. And yet it is to be feared, that many forgetting the example and

holy precepts of Christ, conceive ideas of religious weight, and fail not to display them under a colour of sanctimonious appearance ; in which deceit they certainly will prove the greatest deceived, and fall short of the state of a little child, the only condition of entrance into the portal of eternal rest.

The mixed and corrupt state of society is indeed very alarming ; and if men were only disposed to quit their idols, and give them "to the moles and to the bats," and practically do righteousness ; then might Zion arise from the dust of the earth, and put on her beautiful garments, and appear in the splendour of her excellency, and that power which is of God.

Y. K.

For The Reformer.

The present situation of the Methodist Church in the United States, with respect to the principles of its government, has begun to attract considerable attention. The murmurs and discontent which have been felt in silence by many of the society, have at length broke out into open complainings ; and remonstrances have been addressed, to the propriety of which, no doubt, numbers will accede. As a society, they appear indeed to have become alarmed, at the situation in which they are placed in relation to their rulers, and their system of church government. Nor is it to be wondered at. The people of these free and independent states, whose immediate forefathers had felt the galling chain of oppression, and with unparalleled hardships and sufferings achieved a liberation, have transmitted to their descendants the inheritance of a *principle*, which they hold too dear to their hearts, to resign into the hands of any set of men.

As stated in a pamphlet, entitled *Remarks and Observations Addressed to the Travelling Preachers*, whilst the society was in its infancy, and its illustrious founder was with them, it was peculiarly proper that its members should have submitted implicitly to his paternal government, and yield without mistrust to his rules and laws. For they were in a Gospel sense *his children* ; he had *begotten them in the Gospel*. Their situation in relation to

him, was very similar to that of the first christians in regard to the Apostles, in the earliest periods of the primitive church. But Wesley never could have contemplated, that after his removal, and when the society should have increased to an immense number, that the same kind of control should be perpetuated in the hands of a very few individuals. This had two much of the spirit and leaven of the old Church of Rome, to have entered into his mind; and it smells too strong of Popery and exclusive power for the people of the present day.

No society ought to be governed by men, in whose appointment they have had no immediate agency; nor submit to laws imposed on them by arbitrary authority—this is the very essence of tyranny; and is totally inconsistent with civil rights and Gospel liberty. It is as far from “doing as we would be done by,” as it is possible to conceive; and no man who loves his neighbour as himself, would ever attempt to exercise such an authority. It is the spirit of antichrist, and must fall.

It is true, as they say, the society is very numerous, and made up of an heterogeneous mass; amongst which are many who would be totally unfit to have a controlling sentiment. But why are they unfit? If they have been received into membership upon proper grounds; if they are sincere believers, and are under the influence of christian feelings, it is not at all probable, they would make use of the privilege to the injury of the society, although they may be uneducated, and move in a very humble sphere of life. Such members are indeed often some of the brightest lights in society.

But here it must be observed, that there is manifested by this society, a singular anxiety to make converts, and to add to the number of their members: this is evidenced from the particular care they take to ascertain the numbers attached to the society; and which they as carefully get published, designating the number of old members, and how many new ones have been added since last report. I fear there is in this something of boasting, or self aggrandizement. I am sure it has some very unhappy tendencies. It may influence to the reception of persons who could have no just claim to the privilege of members, and thereby swell the list, but fetter the society with a weight, which would prove deleterious to its health and

welfare, and render it moreover, unfit to be entrusted with its own government and control. It is owing to this very circumstance, that the advocates for an oligarchical power and rule, are furnished with their most efficient arguments. Whilst the society continue to receive so many members of this description, it would, it must be conceded, be extremely difficult to form a system of government, which would give to each member powers which ought to belong to each, without hazarding the tranquillity and harmony of the society. This is the spot which calls for the first amendment preparatively to a change of government in the church. Sure I am, if the society proceed upon christian principles, and none are admitted but upon consistent grounds, there will be nothing to fear from giving the whole mass of members equal rights and privileges. If this be not done, and the same iron despotism continues at the head, the society in all probability ere long will be split into fragments, and possibly be overwhelmed in ruin; a catastrophe to be deplored, for it is abundantly evident, they have been exceedingly vigilant in exploring every dark hole and corner, hunting up the wicked and abandoned, and turning them from their evil ways.

W.

For *The Reformer*.

Messrs. Editors.—I had thought, that the world was sufficiently informed to have known that money was power, and that every cent that was under the control of an individual, increased his power, and gave him an influence and ascendancy, in proportion to the amount; and more especially, when the checks or restraints on that control are small.

I have seen in your paper, some pieces against the undue power of our Bishops, &c. I have also seen some *Letters*, written by an *Itinerant Minister*, against the exorbitant power of the Bishops: and I believe, it is the opinion of the greater part of both preachers and laity, in this part of our connexion, that the Bishops have too much power. But what inconsistent beings we are; while we decry the overgrown power of our rulers with our lips in private, we raise it with both our hands in our public acts.

This remark has been drawn from me, by seeing a Constitution printed in this city, purporting to be a "Constitution of the Missionary Society, of the Methodist Episcopal Church;" the object of which is stated to be, to assist the several annual Conferences, more effectually to extend their Missionary labours throughout the United States, and elsewhere: while it places all the money solely at the disposal of the Bishops. To show the distance it is expected the plan will go into effect, I will here transcribe the tenth Article. "It shall be the duty of the board of managers to use their *best efforts* to promote the establishment of Missionary Societies, within the bounds of the Philadelphia Conference, either auxiliary to, or independent of this society." Hence it will take in an extent of country in which there are 34,852 members. Now, if the one-half of these should join this Missionary Society, it would amount to 17,426, dollars; as each member must pay at least one dollar per annum. Add to this the consideration, that not one-half, if one-fourth of our congregations are members, and allowing one out of ten who are not members to subscribe, we see the vast sum it would put in the hands of the Bishops, to distribute to such Missions or Missionaries, as might suit their own views and purposes, just as they pleased.

It is well known, that the Bishops have power to station the preachers in all the Conferences, and that they are not accountable to any man or set of men, for their official conduct; and they may, for any thing that appears in the constitution, say that it is necessary to have a Missionary stationed in Philadelphia, New-York, or Baltimore, or any other place, as might best answer their designs, or accomplish their own ends, and pay him out of the funds of this Society; or they may appoint none, and expend the money any other way, either to the support of favourites or otherwise, as might suit them best. For who can bring the Bishops to an account?

The eleventh Article says, "It shall be the duty of the Board of Managers, to make known the amount of funds ready for appropriation, and to authorise the Bishops, or either of them, to draw on the Treasurer for the same;" so that all the money collected must be at the disposal of the Bishops. The Board of Managers have not power

to give one dollar to help a poor Missionary, if passing through this city on his way; let him be ever so needy. The whole amount must be drawn and expended by the Bishops, although they may be five or six hundred miles off. The Managers or members, have not power to send a Missionary to any place, although they might be convinced of its necessity and propriety. They must submit to the Bishops to appropriate their money to men, if the Bishops think fit, that might not be qualified; and to appoint Missionaries to labour in places where they are not wanting, and would not be useful; and how could it be prevented, if they were so disposed:—For who can make laws for the Bishops, and to whom are they accountable for their conduct?

Now this is the state of the case, according to the laws by which this society is to be governed, and their money expended: and by their own laws, they are to use their best efforts to get money out of the purses of thousands of people.*

If the Bishops appoint Missionaries, will they not be appointed from among the preachers to the south and west, where the Bishops' great power is most advocated? And will not all who are thus dependent on, and favoured by the Bishops, be in some degree pledged to support their power, and increase their authority, as the Bishops' Missionaries and Envoys?—Who are now the greatest supporters of the Bishops' unlimited power? Are they not those who are put in lucrative stations? Does not one of them now receive 1,500 dollars per annum, and his house rent, which is about 200 dollars more. This is no trifling sum for his support. How many preachers are there in our connexion who would not stand up for the Bishops' power for 1,700 dollars per annum? There are some, no doubt; but do we not know, that putting men in higher and more desirable stations, has closed the mouths of some, and changed the tone of others! Do not be alarmed—these are facts.

* "We are happy to hear," says the *Religious Repository* of April 14, printed at Wilmington, (Del.) "that a proposition is spoken of as likely to be brought forward in the Methodist Conference now sitting in this state, for requiring each member of the Connexion throughout the union, to contribute something yearly for Missionary purposes. This sum put at one dollar, would raise an immense sum," &c.

If this great Missionary affair goes on as it has begun, and the Bishops' power, already too great, increases, as it no doubt will, if supported by the vast sums collected by this means—will not their power be as absolute as the Bishops of Rome? And can we expect any thing better, if we proceed thus, than that we shall, like the Church of Rome, be governed by a Pope, or several Popes. Let us remember, that being raised to a high station in the church, does not make men infallible. No doubt, but those christians who gave so much power to the Bishops of Rome, thought they would always be good and virtuous. But what has been the fact?* Shall we then go on increasing the power of our Bishops, and leave our children bound in chains? God forbid.

It would be adviseable to reform and amend our Constitution, without delay, and not let it get abroad in its present state. If this be not done, can we blame those who sound an alarm to put the people on their guard, not to give their money lest it should be applied only to support unlimited power and priestcraft, which may eventually be very oppressive and grievous.

Our Bishops have now as much power as the Popes of Rome, in most of the spiritual concerns of the church; only, they have no secular power to enforce their decrees; and if we give them the control of the money, it will increase their power and influence still more; so that they will have nothing to fear, and we shall have every thing to dread. The time indeed has now come, when they are in a fair way to accomplish every thing they could desire; for it is not only within the bounds of this Conference, but by a law of the general Conference, passed last May, such societies are to be established in every part of the United States, among more than 250,000 members; besides, those of our congregations who are not in membership, but might subscribe. What a powerful engine the half of 250,000 dollars would be, annexed annually to their present power! May the Lord save us from Popery.

A METHODIST.

* "The progress of power," says Mr. Holmes, "is like our progress in vice, and we do that, at last, with firmness of nerve, from which we should shrink with horror at the commencement of our course. The advance of power is not only *onward*, but *upward*. 'With an eye that never winks, and a wing that never tires,' it soars above, casting all human rights beneath its feet."

For The Reformer.

*A brief examination of "Thoughts, on Lay-Preaching,"
by W. M. Engles.*

Some well timed remarks on this essay, by the editors, have already been inserted in the Reformer. With these I very fully agree; and am induced to believe, that a further examination of some of the more material parts of that performance, will not be altogether useless or uninteresting. In doing this I shall endeavour to be as brief as will consist with perspicuity, and the nature and importance of the subject.

It is the object of the essay to show that "Lay-preaching" is "contrary to scripture authority, and therefore be discountenanced." It "is dangerous" W. M. E. intimates in plain terms, "inasmuch as it levels the barrier, which the scripture interposes between the regularly constituted ministry, and that class who should be only hearers." And again: "Now it can be demonstrated, although we may not have produced conviction, that lay-preaching is an instrumentality directly opposed to an ordinance of God, and consequently is radically illegal." Leaving, for the present, these assertions, let us inquire into the meaning of the terms "Lay preaching."

This is a modern distinction, and, I believe, no where recognized in the bible. But the phrase, if I am not altogether mistaken, is a solecism. Clergy and Laity are unscriptural terms, and should "be discountenanced" as an invention of priest-craft to promote the power and influence of the ministry. In their application, however, they would seem simply intended to distinguish between those who labour in the ministry, and those who do not. Since, then, those who labour in the ministry are preachers, and those who do not labour in the ministry are not preachers, a lay-preacher must be a preacher who does not preach!

But the words are much more conveniently used by the writer of the article under review. If I understand him correctly, Lay-preaching is the preaching of all those ministers who have not been ordained by the imposition of the hands of other ministers, after having passed through the pre-requisites of a collegiate education. "The authority to exercise the functions of this office," says he,

"can only be communicated by those who already possess that authority. The apostles who received an extraordinary call to the ministry, did, by a particular ceremony, communicate ministerial authority to those who were to take part with them in the work; and it is by an imitation of their example, that a regular succession of gospel ministers has been preserved in the church. *None but the lawless and disorderly will deny* that a succession in the ministry is to be preserved in this way; that ministers of the gospel *alone [only]* have authority to admit others to be co-workers with them, to the whole extent of ministerial duty."

This is certainly sweeping language, and ranks with the "lawless and disorderly," not only many of the best men and ablest reformers, who denied the necessity of this succession and imposition of the hands of ministers, but involves in the general censure, more, perhaps, than one half of all the dissenters in christendom. But the censure contained in this paragraph is not more sweeping, than the doctrine inculcated is weak. Uncharitable, however, as the language of it appears in relation to a large body of dissenters, it is a very charitable and cordial acknowledgment of mother church; and if traced to its source, will very legitimately conduct its abettors within her maternal arms. But I presume W. M. Engles, and his associate editors, would not think themselves very highly honoured by the embraces of her whom their predecessors so very cordially stigmatized with the epithet *mother of harlots*. But were such an affinity desired, an insurmountable difficulty remains in the way of this succession. If the authority to exercise the functions of a minister can only be communicated by those who already possess that authority, then, if it can be shown that a period has occurred since the Apostolic age, in which the authority ceased, either in whole or in part, it will follow as an unavoidable consequence, that all preaching of the gospel since, has been either entirely unauthorized, or with authority of a very uncertain and suspicious kind, which is very little better than none. But that such a period has existed, whether the authority be admitted to be of a divine and spiritual nature, or supposed merely to consist in literary acquirement, can easily be proved. And surely none will be so silly as to imagine, the au-

thority for so important a work can consist in an empty form.

But what was that *particular ceremony* by which, W. M. E. asserts, the apostles communicated ministerial authority to those who were to take part with them in the work?

The imposition of hands was a Jewish ceremony, very commonly used when conferring a blessing on any person, or appointing him to any special undertaking. The apostles appear to have continued for some time the use of this custom, as they did many other Jewish ceremonies. And to demonstrate the truth of the gospel in its first promulgation, it pleased God to communicate the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands of the apostles. The imposition of hands, however, was not confined to the apostles, but exercised by the elders and any influential men in the congregation, and that repeatedly on the same person. But that this or any other ceremony, was exclusively used by the apostles, to communicate ministerial authority, is a conclusion not authorised by scripture. Had this even been the fact, “an imitation of their example,”* by those who are divested of the power, would be but an idle pretension, and utterly inconsistent with christian simplicity and sincerity.

It would be easy to enlarge on this part of the subject, but enough has already been said, to show the weakness and absurdity of this pretended succession.

“Many,” says he further, “esteem it their duty to become self-constituted public teachers, when totally unable to account for the impression they have received; they have a vague notion they have received a call, although that call has no foundation in reason. Now we say that the man who urges his spiritual call to preach, when des-

* NEALE, in his *History of the Puritans*, (from whom Presbyterians in this country are descended,) states: “At the first formation of the Puritans in Scotland, [1560] they drew up a scheme of discipline for their church agreeable to the sentiments of Calvin, in which they declare concerning the ordination of ministers:—

“Other ceremonies than the public approbation of the people, and declaration of the chief magistrate, that the person there presented is appointed to serve the church, we cannot approve; for albeit the apostles used imposition of hands, yet seeing the miracle is ceased, the using the ceremony we judge not necessary.”

Ministers in their zeal for priestly prerogatives, pay as little regard to the principles of their founders or predecessors, as to the rights of the people.

titute of necessary human learning, is a fanatic, and is to be avoided as a disturber of the church."

If "human learning," or "human literature," as he elsewhere calls it, be indispensable to shield every minister of the Gospel from the charge of fanaticism, it will be well for W. M. E. in his next essay, to inform the public what portion of it is necessary? Whether it be the precise branches taught in the theological seminaries of the Presbyterian church, or in those of some other denomination? In a matter of such magnitude, involving the character of so large a body of ministers, it will be a point of some consequence to them to know. And it must certainly increase their concern, to discover that their bibles fail to relieve their embarrassment, by a single hint on the subject; but rather, to the comprehension of common readers, teach a doctrine directly the reverse.

That some may imagine they have received a call, and enter upon the important work of a gospel minister, without the necessary qualifications, I do not at all doubt. This proves the liability to error, which attaches to human nature, from which no degree of "human learning" is able to exempt it, and shows the necessity of humility and watchfulness. I have as little doubt, however, that the subjects of such a deception are less to be dreaded, and are regarded by Him who judges the heart, with a more propitious eye, than those whose call to preach consists principally in their literary acquirements, and the prospects of an easy and desirable livelihood.

W. M. E. asserts that "lay-preaching is generally confined among the ignorant, and as commonly produces on their minds the impression, that any individual is invested with a right to preach, who possesses what they style a gift; that is, *a ready utterance, no matter how undigested, crude, and even false, his sentiments.*" This I consider untrue in relation to every christian society, with which I am acquainted. But that a *divine gift* is indispensable to the right exercise of the gospel ministry, was indisputably the opinion of the Apostle Paul, and is the opinion of many at the present time. "No man," says he, "taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God as was Aaron;" and, I may add, as was Paul.

I will close with observing, that as W. M. E. has failed to "produce conviction" "that lay-preaching is opposed

to an *ordinance of God, and radically illegal,*" it remains for him to "demonstrate" it by scripture proofs, none of which he has yet produced, or leave his readers to the obvious deduction, that he has no "scripture barrier," behind which he can securely intrench himself.

CHRISTOPHILUS.

INTELLIGENCE.

The late *Jacob Sherred*, of New-York, has, by will, bequeathed to the *Episcopal Theological Seminary*, of that State, property variously estimated at from 100,000 to 150,000 dollars. [Watchman.]

An editor remarks on the above, "Mr. Sherred, has done well—has obeyed his Lord's injunction, *lay up treasures in Heaven*. How much more consistent has he acted than most rich men, who after enjoying the bounty of Providence in an eminent degree, while living, without gratitude to God; at their death, divide it among their rich friends, that it may be a curse to them also.

"But the worldling is not alone guilty in this respect; *christians* too often partake of their spirit—Bask in the sunshine of prosperity, give sparingly to the cause of Christ, leave large estates to their children and friends, and thus rob God of his due. This is surely burying an important talent; therefore while so many noble objects are in view, let no christian wallow in wealth while living, or die without largely contributing to the Lord's treasury, and thus make their riches a blessing and not a curse."

We are far from believing that giving money to Theological Seminaries is contributing to the *Lord's Treasury*—and we are equally as far from supposing it will be *laying up treasures in Heaven*.

"On Wednesday last," says a Harrisburg (Pa.) paper of March 24th, "several families from the eastward, consisting of upwards of forty persons, passed through this place on their way to Missouri, as Missionaries to spread the Gospel among the Indians." A numerous company went on to the same country the latter part of last summer, passing through nearly the same towns.

A special messenger has arrived in Paris, from Palestine, with a cargo of water from the river Jordan, which he was sent to fetch for the purpose of baptizing the young Due de Bordeaux. [London Paper.]

A writer in the London Times says, "With taxes and poor rates amounting to near seventy millions per annum, a civil list, and a church establishment the most extravagant in Europe, and nine hundred millions of debt, we are not to be consoled by the declaration of any minister of finance, that for many years to come he does not intend to burden us with new taxes."

* * Strictures on Mason's Speech have been received, but we think it would hardly be suitable to insert them at this time.

We regret that in our last number, we were under a necessity, for want of room, to put two of our communications in small letter.

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